

KC Weed News – June 2012

King County, Washington

(<http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/animalsAndPlants/noxious-weeds/weed-news.aspx>)

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Weed of the Month: Poison-hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), a Class B non-Regulated Noxious Weed in King County, Washington

Once again I am hearing stories about poison-hemlock showing up in vegetable gardens or along trails where people are harvesting wild foods. This is scary because of how poisonous the plant is and how much it looks like many edible plants. Just this spring our office received a phone call from someone who stopped a woman from eating poison-hemlock while he was out walking on a trail in Seattle. He couldn't speak her language and isn't sure if she really understood him, but at least she stopped collecting the leaves. Last year, my daughter's old elementary school had a scare when they realized there was poison-hemlock growing through the playground fence where the kids were playing, and not far from their school garden. There are even scarier stories where people actually ingested poison-hemlock and became seriously ill or even died, as in the cases in 2010 from Bellingham and Tacoma. A recent article in Food Safety News sums up the problems and the worries very well:

<http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2012/06/garden-visitor-can-be-deadly-if-eaten/>.

Although there are many poisonous plants in the world, this particular one worries me more than most because it is so common around homes and places where people grow and collect food, and because it so closely resembles edible plants. If you have a garden, work in a school, manage a park, belong to a p-patch, or just take walks on city trails, you should definitely know how to identify and avoid poison-hemlock.

The second year poison-hemlock plants are pretty conspicuous right now since they are tall and flowering, with many small umbrella-shaped clusters of tiny white flowers loosely arranged all over the upper portion of the plants. Even from a distance you can spot the tall plants along the road because the profusion of little white flowers and bright green leaves contrast with the dark green blackberry thickets and other typical roadside vegetation. However, the first year plants are small and would be easy to confuse with other plants in the carrot family. The leaves are

very ferny and divided into segments like a carrot or parsley leaf, so they won't help much in distinguishing the plant. Fortunately, poison-hemlock stems always have **purple or reddish blotches** or lines on them, even on the leaf stalks. Also, poison-hemlock stems **aren't hairy** like [wild carrot](#), [giant hogweed](#) or [rough chervil](#) stems and the plant has a distinctively unpleasant **musty smell**.

Even if you don't have any poison-hemlock near your own garden, please help others by letting them know if you see any. This is especially important in p-patch or community gardens where new gardeners or newcomers to our area may be unfamiliar with this plant. In public parks or on trails, you can contact the local parks department and encourage them to remove the plants where they are most accessible to people who might be harvesting wild plants for food.

Poison-hemlock is acutely toxic to people and animals, with symptoms appearing 20 minutes to three hours after ingestion. All parts of the plant are poisonous and even the dead canes remain toxic for up to three years. The amount of toxin varies and tends to be higher in sunny areas. Eating the plant is the main danger, but it is also toxic to the skin and respiratory system. When digging or mowing large amounts of poison-hemlock, it is best to wear gloves and a mask or take frequent breaks to avoid becoming ill. One individual had a severe reaction after pulling plants on a hot day because the toxins were absorbed into her skin. The typical symptoms for humans include dilation of the pupils, dizziness, and trembling followed by slowing of the heartbeat, paralysis of the central nervous system, muscle paralysis, and death due to respiratory failure. For animals, symptoms include nervous trembling, salivation, lack of coordination, pupil dilation, rapid weak pulse, respiratory paralysis, coma, and sometimes death. For both people and animals, quick treatment can reverse the harm and typically there aren't noticeable aftereffects. If you suspect poisoning from this plant, call for help immediately because the toxins are fast-acting – for people, call poison-control at 1-800-222-1222 or for animals, call your veterinarian.

In King County, poison-hemlock falls into the category of [noxious weeds](#) that are so widespread in the county that control is not required, although agencies and property owners are encouraged to remove it if possible or at least keep it out of areas that are accessible to people or animals. Other counties in Washington do require control of poison-hemlock, so be sure to call your local noxious weed board to see what rules apply in your area. If you have poison-hemlock, it can be effectively controlled by manual or mechanical methods – pulling or digging up small plants, cutting below the crown for large plants, or repeated mowing starting in early April. Always use gloves when handling and wear a mask or take frequent breaks when mowing large patches. For more information, visit our [website](#) or contact the noxious weed program at 206-296-0290 or noxious.weeds@kingcounty.gov.

Weed Tips for June

Even though it's getting huge, it still might be too early to control your knotweed.

[Knotweed](#) is almost full grown this month, but if you are planning to use stem-injection to control it, you should wait until July or later and you shouldn't cut it down. However, if you plan on starving the roots by keeping the knotweed cut down (and never taller than 6 inches), then this month you will probably be cutting it back every week to keep up with its rapid growth. And, if you are using the covering method to starve the roots, you should check the covering every week or two to make sure there are no holes or sneaky knotweed stems emerging anywhere, and to stomp down any growth pushing up the fabric. If you are unsure what method would work best for your patch of knotweed, check out our [website](#) or attend one of our workshops listed below.

Spread the word to friends and neighbors about giant hogweed. It's sad to hear about children who play with [giant hogweed](#) stems and get burned, or gardeners who use a weed whacker on hogweed and get blisters all over their bare legs. If you have giant hogweed in your neighborhood, make sure to tell everyone to watch out for this plant and to call the noxious weed program for help if they don't know how to remove it safely. Check the [noxious weed map](#) for King County on our website to see if it has been seen in your area. This month, hogweed's central stems covered with stiff white hairs and purple bumps will be rising above the giant jagged leaves and starting to flower. Digging up hogweed when it is full grown is tricky. Make sure to wear gloves and long sleeves and pants and carefully cut down the flowering stem without getting the juice on you. Then remove the leaves enough to get access to the roots. Dig up as much root as you can, at least 6 inches deep if possible. Place the hogweed in a sturdy plastic bag and discard in your garbage. Please [contact our program](#) if you find this plant or need assistance removing it.

Pull tansy ragwort before you see yellow. Bolting [tansy ragwort](#) is taking energy from the roots. This means weak roots that are easy to pull out of the ground. If you pull it before the yellow flowers open, it can be left to compost without risk of seeds forming. However, make sure to keep pulled plants away from livestock – tansy ragwort remains toxic when dry and is more palatable after being pulled. Look for tansy ragwort anywhere it was growing last year – seeds last up to 16 years in the soil, so you are sure to get new plants where it was last year. Remember to look for low-growing rosettes as well as tall, bolting plants.

Act quickly to stop flowering weeds from going to seed. When weeds are flowering, it means there's no time to lose and it's also the easiest time to spot hard-to-find weeds. There is still time to find and control [garlic mustard](#), which is starting to set seed. Pulling it now is important since once the seeds mature, there are at least seven more years of bad luck. Noxious weeds that are flowering (or will be soon) include: [Dalmatian toadflax](#), [spotted knapweed](#), [meadow knapweed](#), [milk thistle](#), [orange hawkweed](#), [yellow hawkweed](#), and [poison-hemlock](#), [sulfur cinquefoil](#),. Many more noxious weeds will start flowering later in June including: [diffuse knapweed](#), [giant hogweed](#), [tansy ragwort](#) and [goatsrue](#).

Report [regulated noxious weeds](#) on roads and trails. County, city and state crews are all busy working on noxious weeds along roadsides, trails and parks. However, even with their hard work and our own efforts to send them locations of regulated noxious weeds, we can't be everywhere and some sites get missed. If you see a patch of tansy ragwort or any other regulated noxious weed growing on public land or a roadside, please contact our office and we will make sure the right agency or property owner gets notified quickly. We can be reached at 206-296-0290 or you can use our [online infestation report form](#).

Cool, wet springs are a great time to pull weeds. Pulling weeds right now is very satisfying. The weeds are big and leafy and easy to find and grab hold of. Even better, the roots come up more or less intact this time of year with much less work. The soil is still moist and loose and roots don't break off as much as they will later in the season. This means much less re-growth. And because the soil is damp (and getting damper with all our rain), mulching where you clear weeds will keep the soil nice and moist for your garden plants all summer long.

Learn How to Control Knotweed (and Qualify to Borrow a Stem Injector)

We will be holding four workshops on [knotweed](#) control in June and July. We want to show what's involved in effectively getting this plant controlled and how and where to use different methods. It can be frustrating to keep trying to get rid of knotweed and not have it work, year

after year. Hopefully we can help you figure out what to do that will work better. These workshops will be very hands on and interactive. We will also be providing specific training on using the knotweed stem injectors effectively. Participants in this training will be eligible to borrow our stem injectors for use on their own land.

Although we have grant projects to help control knotweed on the upper reaches of some of the major rivers in the county, we don't have the resources to tackle knotweed everywhere. Our goal is to encourage and help more people begin to fight back against knotweed in order to reduce its impact on our natural resources.

The workshops are free and open to the public. WSDA license recertification credits will be available for each class (2 credits). [Register online](#) or contact Sasha Shaw <sasha.shaw@kingcounty.gov> or Frances Lucero <frances.lucero@kingcounty.gov> for more information or call us at 206-296-0290. See our [website](#) for more details.

Knotweed Workshop Dates and Locations:

- **June 16th**, 11:00 am-1:00 pm, [Cedar Grange](#), 22531 SE 218th, Maple Valley
- **June 28th**, 6:30-8:30 pm, [Meadowbrook Farm Interpretive Center](#), 1711 Boalch Ave, North Bend, WA 98045
- **July 10th**, 6:30-8:30 pm, [South Seattle Community College](#), Room LHO#2, 6000 16 Avenue S.W., Seattle, WA 98106-1499
- **July 17th**, 6:30-8:30 pm, [Covington Library](#), 27100 164th Ave SE, Covington, WA 98042

Where to Find our Weed Info Booth This Summer

You will be able to ask weed questions in person, check out live weed specimens, and pick up fact sheets and booklets at the following locations this summer (check out our [complete schedule](#) online and if you have a community event that could use a booth on invasive and noxious weeds, please [contact us](#)):

- **June 8-10**, [Maple Valley Days](#), Lake Wilderness Park, 23601 224th Ave SE, Maple Valley
- **June 13**, [Sammamish Farmer's Market](#), 4-8pm, [Sammamish Commons](#), 801 228th Ave SE, Sammamish
- **June 23**, [Maple Valley Farmer's Market](#), 9am-1pm, Rock Creek Elementary School, Maple Valley
- **July 3**, [Renton Farmers Market](#), 3-7pm, at the Piazza in downtown Renton
- **July 19**, [North Bend Farmers Market](#), Si View Community Center, North Bend, Si View Community Center, North Bend
- **July 20-21**, [Enumclaw Street Fair](#), 10-8 both days, downtown Cole St., Enumclaw
- **July 21-22**, [Vashon-Maury Island Strawberry Festival](#), Vashon Island
- **July 29**, [Auburn International Farmers Market](#), 10am-3pm, Auburn Station Plaza, Auburn
- **July 31**, [Carnation Farmers Market](#), 3-7 pm, downtown Carnation
- **August 4**, [Redmond Farmers Market](#), 9am-3pm, 7730 Leary Way NE, Redmond
- **August 11**, [Rock the Green Clean](#), Middle Green River Coalition, Kanaskat State Park

Help Protect Wilderness Areas from Invasive Plants: Volunteer as a Weed Watcher

We often hear about the importance of finding new weed infestations early and responding quickly to stop them while we still can. If you become a weed watcher for our wilderness areas, you can do just that. Thanks to a partnership between the King County Noxious Weed Program, the Mountains to Sound Greenway, the US Forest Service, Washington DNR, and the Mountaineers, volunteer weed watchers are being trained to report invasive plants on trails in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, the Middle Fork Snoqualmie Valley and the trails of the Upper South Fork Snoqualmie. It can be discouraging to see invasive plants in remote areas when no one has the resources to do anything about it. We are training volunteers to find these invasive plants, pull them if they can, and report them to the partnership so that they will be controlled before they spread any further. The public agencies don't have the resources to search all the trails for weeds, but once they know where they are located, they can often budget and plan for their removal. And by knowing which trails are weed free, the agencies can save staff time for the areas that most need their help.

Starting this year, we are partnering with the [Mountaineers](#) to start up the [Alpine Lakes Wilderness Weed Watchers](#). We had our first training already on June 3, attended by a great group of hardy and enthusiastic volunteers, and there is an evening orientation meeting coming up for anyone else interested in participating or finding out more about this exciting new program on **June 27, 6:30-8:30 pm** at the Mountaineers Program Center, 7700 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115.

Our program is also continuing to coordinate and recruit new volunteers for the [Upper Snoqualmie Weed Watchers](#). This weed watcher program is part of an ongoing cooperative effort with [Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust](#) and the King County Noxious Weed Program to find and remove invasive plants from the Middle Fork Snoqualmie Valley and the Cascade Gateway trails of the South Fork Snoqualmie basin, including state and federal forest lands and wilderness areas. We need people who can hike a trail or two this summer and keep track of where they see invasive plants growing. It helps to have a GPS (or any device that gives latitude and longitude) and some plant knowledge, but we provide training so you don't have to be an expert. If you can't make it to the training, let me know and I'll work out a way to get you up to speed and out on the trails. New this year is an exciting [online weed watcher reporting site](#) so volunteers can enter and manage their own data online.

When: Saturday, June 23, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Where: North Bend Ranger Station (in the conference hall behind the main building)

Logistics: Starts and ends in the classroom, with a field portion in the middle. Be ready for a short hike (possibly muddy) and bring lunch, water, GPS and compass if you have them, and something to write on.

To Sign Up: Email Sasha Shaw <sasha.shaw@kingcounty.gov>.

Weed Specialist Finds a New Hawkweed for King County

Matt Below, weed specialist for the Maple Valley and Kent/Covington/Black Diamond area, recently discovered a population of a non-native invasive hawkweed that hadn't been recorded for King County previously. Although we have more than our fair share of yellow, orange, common, tall and European hawkweed, we can now add [yellow-devil hawkweed](#), also known as king-devil hawkweed (which I personally think is a better name since it sounds so much worse). The Latin name is *Hieracium x floribundum*, the x reflecting the fact that it is a hybrid species between two other hawkweeds and suggesting that it will be variable and perhaps more

challenging to control. The population Matt found is a sizable, dense patch growing on SE Kent-Kangley RD, east of the Four Corners area, in the City of Kent Watershed. So far this is the only patch we've found, but hawkweeds are notoriously hard to identify and easy to miss, so we may well have more populations of this species than we realize.

Yellow-devil hawkweed is a [Class A noxious weed](#), which reflects its limited distribution in Washington, so this population will be a high priority for us to eradicate. If you are curious about how to distinguish yellow-devil hawkweed from similar hawkweed species, the first thing that I noticed was the presence of very leafy stolons combined with stems and flowers that resembled those of yellow hawkweed (*H. caespitosum*), but in a more open flower arrangement than yellow hawkweed's tight flower clusters. Also, the leaves are mainly hairy only on the edges and the midribs, not all over like yellow hawkweed, and they are bluish-green not bright green like yellow hawkweed. There is more information and photos in the helpful [Key to Invasive and Native Hawkweeds in the Pacific Northwest](#) by Linda Wilson, (http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/weeds/brochures/Hawkweed_key_PNW.pdf). In some ways, yellow-devil hawkweed is actually kind of an interesting species. Too bad it's highly invasive, difficult to control and highly likely to have a negative impact in native habitats.

State Weed Board Receives Proposals for 2013 Weed List

The [Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board](#) is responsible for creating and updating the state list of noxious weeds that landowners may be required to control or that county weed boards may select for required control in their county. This list is included in WAC 16.750 and determines which plants meet the criteria of a noxious weed, and where in Washington control may be required. Any citizen or organization can make nominations for changes to the noxious weed list and proposals are due each year by April 30. The state weed board then reviews these proposals and gathers more information before making a decision on whether to approve or reject them, usually at their November meeting.

This year, the state weed board received nominations for adding four new species to the weed list: French broom, tall hawkweed, common teasel and common barberry. They also received a proposal to change the listing of [Japanese eelgrass \(*Zostera japonica*\)](#), which was added to the Class C list last year on commercial shell fish beds only. The proposal submitted is to remove the limitation and have it be a Class C noxious weed wherever it occurs in the state.

Here is some information on the new species proposed for the state weed list.

[French Broom \(*Genista monspessulana*\)](#) is an aggressive pioneer species and takes advantage of land disturbances to establish and spread. In California, large infestations displace native plant species and significantly increase the costs of reforestation in commercial timberlands. This species is proposed for the Class A list.

[Tall Hawkweed \(*Hieracium piloselloides*\)](#) is one of many species of non-native, invasive hawkweed that are spreading in the United States and Canada. Tall hawkweed has yellow flowers in clusters on tops of somewhat hairy, leafless stems similar to yellow hawkweed, but it tends to be taller and its leaves are only hairy on the edges and the midrib. It impacts mountain meadows and rangeland habitat, especially at higher elevations. The proposal is to list this hawkweed as a Class B.

[Common Teasel \(*Dipsacus fullonum*\)](#) is a perennial weed commonly found along roadsides, fields and undeveloped areas. It is sometimes used in horticultural plantings and dried flower

arrangements. Each plant can produce 2,000 seeds a year and spread can be rapid. This plant usually occurs on roadsides, open fields and pastures. The proposal is to list this as a Class C.

Common Barberry (*Berberis vulgaris*) is a deciduous shrub growing to 8-10 feet in height. This is not one of barberry species that is commonly used as an ornamental. The main concern is that common barberry is an alternate host for wheat rust, and could increase damage to wheat crops. It also produces a large number of seeds which have a high germination rate and seeds are transported to new locations with the help of birds and small mammals that eat it. It can form spiny dense stands that shade out and limit the growth of native plants and it can reduce wildlife habitat and forage. This species is also proposed for the Class C list.

The Noxious Weed Committee of the state weed board held their first meeting on May 29 to review these proposals and will continue to review and research the proposals over the summer. The committee will develop an initial recommendation for public comment and testimony at a public hearing held in November. The State Noxious Weed Board will then consider the public testimony received and make a final decision on changes to the weed list before the end of the year. After the state officially adopts the new list and decides where weeds should be required for control, the county weed boards can select additional species on the list for required control or choose additional species for educational efforts.

If you have any observations or opinions from King County about the distribution, invasiveness and potential impacts of any of the species proposed for listing, please feel free to contact us: [Steve Burke](#) or [Sasha Shaw](#). For information on the listing process or for more information on any of the proposals, contact [Alison Halpern](#) or [Wendy DesCamp](#) with the State Noxious Weed Board.

Recent "Weeds in the News" Stories from Near and Far

There were many news stories to choose from over the past month or so. Here are a few that I found most interesting and relevant to weed issues in King County.

A timely alert about poison-hemlock: <http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2012/06/garden-visitor-can-be-deadly-if-eaten/>

A nice story on using goats to manage noxious weeds in British Columbia: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/munching-goats-graze-away-at-invasive-plants-in-peace-district/article2448107/>

Good news about British Columbia's recent commitment to increasing resources to fight invasive plants in the province: <http://www.vancouversun.com/technology/Telus+Volunteers+battle+English+Invaders+Stanley+Park/6687993/story.html>

Have you noticed Scotch broom more than usual this year? Here's an article about it: <http://heraldnet.com/article/20120526/NEWS01/705269952>

A great reminder to all of us who recreate in the wilderness about preventing the spread of noxious weeds: http://www.agweekly.com/articles/2012/05/24/news/ag_news/news69.txt

An article about noxious weed impacts in Oregon and their outreach efforts through Oregon's Invasive Weed Awareness Week: <http://www.agweekly.com/articles/2012/05/21/commodities/crop/crop10.txt>

From Winnipeg, Canada, an article about the proposal to ban pesticide use, at least partially, throughout the province: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/weeding-out-the-chemicals-152134735.html>

From Australia, an article about the problems of Roundup-resistant weeds and also about the increased efforts and legislation changes in Australia to try to reduce the spread and impact of noxious weeds in the country:
<http://www.bellingencourier.com.au/news/local/news/general/farmers-reach-for-big-guns-as-super-weeds-refuse-to-die/2556478.aspx?storypage=1>

And finally, to come full circle, another article about our Weed of the Month, poison-hemlock:
<http://www.maplevalleyreporter.com/lifestyle/151212515.html>

If I missed your favorite story on weeds, let me know. There are so many interesting weed related stories this time of year and it's always interesting to read how different areas of the world are being impacted and how they are dealing with invasive and noxious weeds.